

**Purpose and Need**  
**South Green Valley Parkway**  
**Tonto National Forest, Payson Ranger District**

**Date:** 04/07/2021  
**ID Team Leader:** Mark McEntarffer, Realty Specialist  
**Prepared By:** Patrick Blair, SWCA Environmental  
**Project Name:** South Green Valley Parkway  
**Project type:** Roadway Extension  
**Target Implementation:** 2023  
**Expected NEPA Document:** Environmental Assessment

## Background

The Town of Payson (Town) is proposing to construct, operate, and maintain an extension of the existing South Green Valley Parkway alignment (project) within a new roadway right-of-way (ROW) in Gila County, Arizona, on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) National Forest System (NFS) in the Tonto National Forest (Tonto NF). The project activities are proposed to be implemented on approximately 17.5 acres of public lands administered by the Payson Ranger District of the Tonto NF.

The Town will submit an Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands for the project to the Forest Service prior to construction. To authorize the project and grant use of the land, the Forest Service would issue a special use authorization via a Special Use Permit (SUP). The SUP would be a legal document allowing occupancy, use, rights, or privileges on NFS lands. If approved by the Forest Service, the SUP for the project would be granted for a period of 30 years. A SUP is needed because the project would occupy, use, and build on NFS lands.

## Project Location

The project would be a new roadway corridor (total ROW would be approximately 3,800 feet long by 200 feet wide) located adjacent to the Town in Gila County, Arizona (Figure 1) on approximately 18 acres of NFS lands. The project is in Section 9 of Township 10 North, Range 10 East Payson South Quadrangle (US Geological Survey 1975).

## Existing Condition

The proposed project area is currently undeveloped and within relatively undisturbed pinyon juniper woodland. The project area is hilly with typical elevations ranging from about 4,895 feet to 5,020 feet above mean sea level.

The southern end of South Green Valley Parkway currently terminates in a residential area at the Forest Service boundary approximately 3,200 feet north of the Payson Event Center. A short extension of South Green Valley Parkway also extends westward from SR 87 to the Forest Service boundary, providing

access to the Event Center. No vehicle or pedestrian connector route between these two termini of South Green Valley Parkway currently exists.

### **Forest Service Handbook Direction**

Forest Service Handbook 2709.11, *Special Uses Handbook* (Forest Service 1992), directs the Forest Service on how to process special use permit applications. Guidance in the handbook directs the Forest Service not to create an exclusive or perpetual right of use or occupancy. The proposed project would not in effect grant title to federal land to an authorization holder, nor would it create the appearance of such a right.

### **Forest Plan Consistency**

The 1985 Tonto NF Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) includes management direction to “allow the use of available National Forest lands for appropriate public or private interests consistent with National Forest policies” and “actively participate with all interested and potentially affected parties to develop strategic Interface management measures to reduce Wildland Fire threats to life, property and resources, address issues of Forest health, and provide for community partnerships...” (Forest Service 1985).

## **Desired Conditions**

The 1985 Tonto NF Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) prescriptions for land resource and wildland fire protection emphasize the desire to both increase efficiency in resource management and to satisfy the needs of expanding communities like the Town.

The proposed project is intended to connect the existing South Green Valley Parkway alignment to State Route 87 (SR 87), improving traffic circulation while also improving the Town’s protection and ability to respond to wildfire.

## **Purpose and Need**

The Town’s General Plan 2014-2024 (Town of Payson 2014) identifies the proposed project for improved traffic circulation. The Arizona Department of Transportation has also recommended that a project similar to the one being proposed be built to relieve congestion along SR 87 and improve traffic circulation. In addition, the Town’s Green Valley Parkway Extension Committee has identified the proposed project as a physical fire break between NFS lands and the southwestern portion of the Town.

The purpose for this project is to construct, operate, and maintain a new roadway sufficient to provide a fire evacuation route for the Town residents. The Town would install hydrants along the road corridor that could be used for emergency fire suppression. The project is needed to improve circulation in the southwestern portion of the Town and decrease congestion of the existing evacuation route (SR 87). The new Green Valley Parkway would also reduce the vulnerability of the southwestern portion of the Town to wildfires.

The purpose and need of the Payson Ranger District’s federal action is to respond to the Town’s request for ROW and SUP application.

## Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is for the Forest to authorize the Town of Payson to construct, operate, and maintain a new segment of South Green Valley Parkway within a new 200-foot-wide ROW corridor under an SUP granted by the Forest Service.

The new roadway (3,800 linear feet) would extend the existing South Green Valley Parkway alignment from Town land at the Payson Event center northward across the Payson Ranger District to Town lands at the existing Green Valley Parkway. The new roadway would be aligned to avoid private lands and match the Town's exiting transportation easements for South Green Valley Parkway. The total area of permanent new ROW on NFS land would be approximately 18 acres. All proposed project activities would occur within the new ROW on NFS land, with no temporary construction easements required.

The roadway would be paved and striped to allow for two lanes of travel (one lane in each direction), the total paved roadway width would be approximately 42 feet from back of curb to back of curb. A separated multiuse pathway would be constructed along one side of the roadway. The project would clear vegetation only from the areas necessary to construct roadway and multiuse path, plus approximately 31.5 feet for a fire management zone, unless cut/fill slopes require a larger corridor. A permanent water line and hydrant system for emergency fire suppression would be installed within the ROW, which would be connected to the Town's existing water system.

Project construction would occur in a single work event with construction estimated to begin July of 2023 and continue for 12 months. The timing of construction activities would be subject to seasonal timing restrictions for sensitive wildlife species to the extent practicable and would also be subject to Town noise ordinance requirements.

Construction access would be via existing Green Valley Parkway segments to the north and south of the project area. Existing public motorized and pedestrian traffic patterns along SR 87 and Green Valley Parkway would be maintained throughout construction. The project would employ standard traffic control procedures during construction as needed.

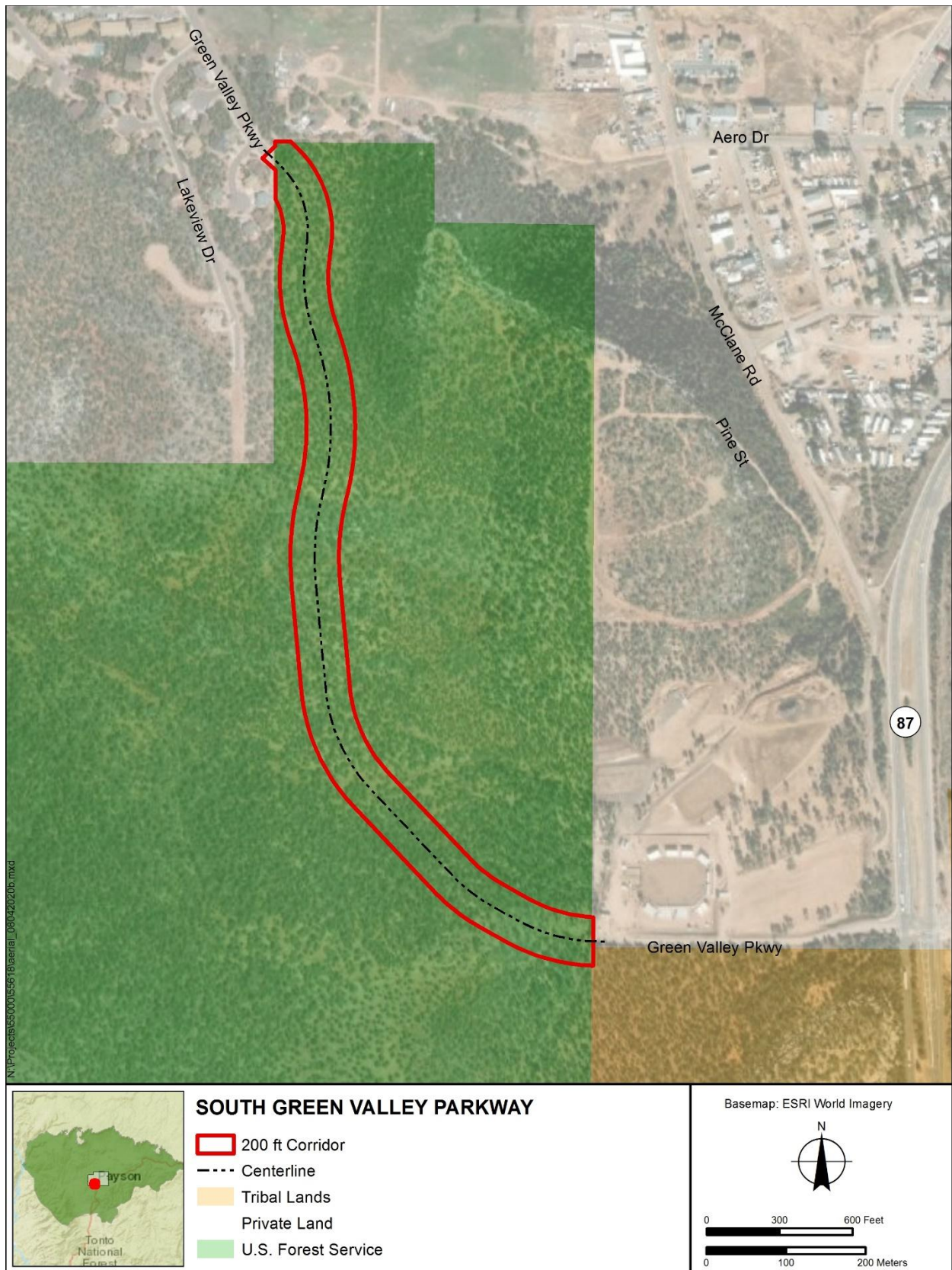
The new roadway and 200-foot corridor would not be located upon the Tonto Apache Indian Tribe lands, which are located to the south the Payson Events Center.

## Design Features

The project would be conducted in accordance with the Payson, Arizona, Code of Ordinances and Uniform Standard Details for Public Works Construction (Maricopa Association of Governments, which would comply with Forest Service road design standards. The following design features would be implemented as part of the project to avoid, minimize, or mitigate project impacts on affected resources:

Design Feature	Resource Area(s)
Route the new roadway and associated waterline in previously disturbed areas where possible and in alignment with existing facilities and infrastructure.	All
Minimize the disturbance footprint.	All
Construction equipment would be maintained in good working condition to prevent fuel and lubricant leaks and excessive air quality impacts during construction.	Air Quality / Soil / Water Resources
When practicable, equipment maintenance will occur within a designated area outside of the project area.	Soil / Water Resources
The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan implemented for the project would include dust management controls during ground-disturbing activities, such as road watering, and erosion controls as necessary.	Air Quality / Soil / Water Resources
Limit tree removal to within the 30-foot clear zone to either side of the new roadway, with a maximum vegetation clearing limit of approximately 120 feet wide, totaling 10.5 acres to the extent possible. Mature ponderosa pines may be removed. The Town would coordinate with District Forestry personnel to ensure proper sale or disposal of timber.	Forest Lands / Forest Resources / Vegetation Resources
No range improvements have been identified in the project area; however, should any be discovered and disturbed by construction, they will be replaced.	Land Use and Access / Range
Town of Payson, Arizona, Code of Ordinances: From June 1 to September 1, inclusive, construction activities would be limited between 5 a.m. and 10 p.m. Monday through Friday. From September 2 to May 31, inclusive, construction activities would be limited between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., Monday through Friday. Construction activities occurring on Saturday, Sunday, or a state or federal holiday would be limited between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.	Land Use and Access / Noise / Socioeconomics / Recreation
Access to private properties and businesses would be maintained during construction and after construction is completed.	Land Use and Access
Access for emergency purposes would be maintained.	Land Use and Access
No temporary road closures and/or alternative access routes would be implemented.	Land Use and Access
If ground disturbance activities are planned during the migratory bird nesting season (mid-February and late September), measures to avoid any active bird nests within the project area at that time should be taken to maintain compliance with the MBTA since suitable nesting habitat for migratory bird species is present in the project area. These measures could include a preconstruction nest survey by a qualified biologist and buffering any active nests to avoid direct and indirect impacts until the nest is no longer active.	Wildlife
If trenches cannot be backfilled and must be left open overnight, they will be covered with metal plates. If covered exposed trenches is not possible a "ramp" will be excavated on one side so wildlife can escape.	Wildlife
If project design changes including physical alterations, removal, replacement, damage to, or destruction of the historic properties (or those treated as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places [NRHP] for the current undertaking) are documented in the project area or any parts thereof, additional evaluation and assessment would be required to determine whether these changes to the project would result in adverse effects pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA.	Heritage Resources
In the unlikely event that previously undocumented heritage resources are identified during project implementation on NFS lands, the Tonto NF South Zone Archaeologist and the Tonto NF Forest Archaeologist would be notified immediately and all work would cease within 100 feet (30 m) of the find until a qualified archaeologist has documented the discovery and evaluated its eligibility for the NRHP.	Heritage Resources
Unanticipated discoveries of heritage resources on Town-administered lands must also include notification to the Tonto NF as the lead federal agency and to the designated Town representative for the project. Work must not resume without approval of the appropriate land management agency.	Heritage Resources

<b>Design Feature</b>	<b>Resource Area(s)</b>
If the unanticipated discovery involves human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on NFS lands, all work would immediately cease within 100 feet (30 m) of the discovery and the Tonto NF South Zone Archaeologist and the Tonto NF Forest Archaeologist would be notified immediately of the discovery. The area of the discovery would be clearly delineated, protected, and secured until Tonto NF Heritage Program staff have been contacted and have had the opportunity to evaluate the nature and significance of the discovery. All discoveries on NFS lands would be treated in accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Public Law 101-601; 25 USC 3001–3013), and work must not resume in the area without proper authorization from the Tonto NF.	Heritage Resources
For unanticipated discoveries of human remains, funerary objects, sacred ceremonial objects, or objects of national or tribal patrimony identified on municipal lands during project implementation, which are considered State lands under the Arizona Antiquities Act, all project work would cease within 100 feet (30 m) of the discovery, the area would be protected and secured, and the Director of the Arizona State Museum would be notified in accordance with Arizona Revised Statutes 41-844.	Heritage Resources
Construction activities and installation of permanent features would avoid sensitive areas, including wetlands or erosion-prone soils to the extent practicable.	Soils and Water Resources
Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits will be obtained, and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be implemented.	Soils and Water Resources





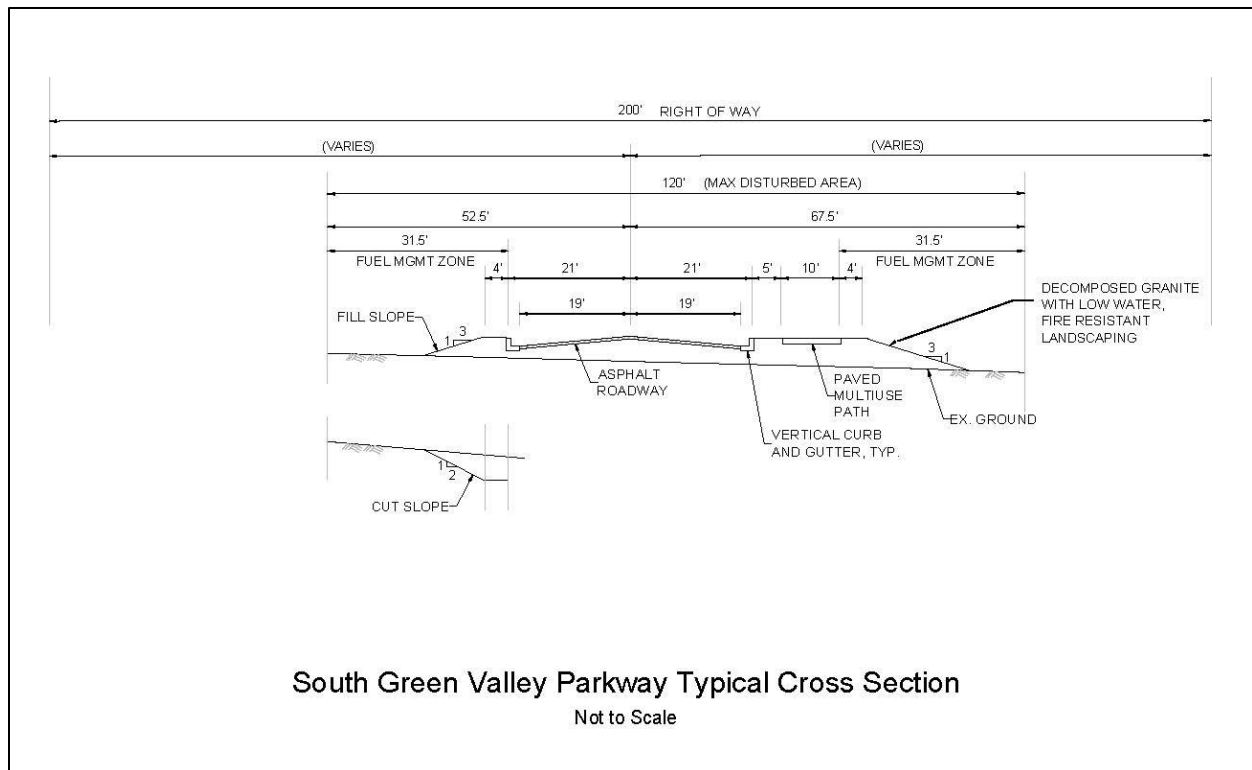


Figure 2 South Green Valley Parkway typical roadway section

## Contact

Please provide your questions, concerns, or requested mitigations electronically only to:

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